

# CONDITION CENSUS OF PITT FARTHINGS

**Last Updated on May 17, 2021**

**By Christopher R. McDowell**

What follows is a listing of all known Pitt farthings in rank order of their state of preservation. There is no doubt that Pitt farthings exist that are not listed here either because they appeared in small auctions or still lay undiscovered in an old trunk in an attic in England or America, but it is surmised that this number is low. Twenty-seven different Pitt farthings are identified, five of which are housed in large institutional collections. A condition census is by its very nature a subjective exercise; however, I have applied objective criteria to the listing by using generally agreed upon grading principles. The task is made more difficult by differences in image quality and changing grading standards. These problems have been mitigated to some degree by a personal examination of as many of the specimens as possible. At the end of the day, however, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and some selections just came down to personal preference.

This condition census of Pitt farthings was made possible through a research grant by the Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society (EPNNEs). This Appendix is viewable on the Newman Portal in color. Should any new Pitt farthings be discovered, this document will be updated on the Newman Portal to reflect the latest information. It is requested that anyone with information to add to this census contact the author through the American Numismatic Society.



**No. 1 The Ford Sale Pitt Farthing, (Stack's, 1/18/2005) lot 137;**

Ex: Henry Chapman's Sale 11/30/1908, lot 258; F.C.C. Boyd, where it sold for \$25.50.

--- This medalet is 24.7 mm in diameter and weighs 58.2 grains. It was described as Choice EF in the Ford VII catalog. In actuality, it is easily AU or better. The center of the obverse is light golden-brown with some lighter patches scattered here and there, with the periphery on the obverse still showing an original bright brassy yellow gold color. The reverse of this piece, as described by the Ford cataloger, is smooth with a *"more even pale gold and brown combination with considerable original brassy yellow gold color around protected areas."* This specimen was

examined in September 2018 and again on September 14, 2019. Amazingly, it is far nicer in person than the image and description in the Ford catalog make it out to be. Some of what appears to be discoloration behind Pitt's head and near the "E" in *COMMERCE* is the residue of old silvering. The silvering residue was not mentioned in the Ford catalog description. A close examination of the edge shows linear polishing or grinding lines. These same lines are found on many other specimens, but because of the high state of preservation of this piece, and the fact that it is unslabbed, they are more readily observable here. It is believed these lines relate to the fact that the medalet is struck on a cast planchet. This farthing currently resides in Roger Siboni's collection and the image above was generously provided by him. Sold for \$43,125.00 in 2005.



**No. 2 The Silvered Fox Pitt Farthing** (Stack's, 1/27/2011) lot 5838;

--- This medalet weighs 59.1 grains. The 2011 lot description states that it was recently brought to America from England—one of many pieces on this list currently in American collections that can be directly traced back to England. This eye-catching medalet was examined in-hand on September 14, 2019. It is PCGS-certified as AU55 and is a close rival for the finest known. This specimen could reasonably be placed in the No. 1 position on this census, and the price suggests that more than one person might agree with that assessment. It is the only known Pitt farthing to have retained its full silver wash; however, the silvering is no longer uniform in color. All ten portholes are clearly visible and the hair detail, which is superb, is slightly stronger than what is found on the Ford Pitt farthing, but the reverse is slightly weaker. It may be the closest thing we have today to what fresh Pitt farthings looked like. This example is currently part of Sydney Martin's estate. Mr. Martin was well-known for his exceptional eye for quality and rarity. He very graciously extended this author the opportunity to examine this very special medalet in-hand. Sold for \$94,875.00 in 2011.





### No. 3 The Anton Brass Pitt Farthing

--- In the February 2005 issue of the *Numismatist*, William T. Anton, Jr. offered a 1766 Pitt farthing in brass for \$245,000.00 that was described as “*Gem Uncirculated. Ex: President Rutherford Hayes.*” Anton’s offering was not accompanied by an image or further descriptive detail. Contained within the correspondence between Eric Newman and William Anton, viewable on the Newman Portal, is an exchange from 1971. In that year, Anton sent Newman a positive and negative X-Ray of this brass Pitt farthing, which he stated was coin No. 316, Plate 27, of Don Taxay’s *Scott’s Catalogue and Encyclopedia of U.S. Coins* (1971). Anton further described it to Newman as “*uncirculated or so and a brass or bath type of metal. Very light.*” Anton sent the X-Rays to Newman because he was concerned that they may show a casting port. After examining the X-Rays, which are now lost, Newman determined that they did not show a casting port. Few people have seen this medalet, which is believed to have passed to Anton’s son upon his death. Fortunately, an advanced colonial coin collector and a colonial coin dealer who have both seen this Pitt farthing were located and interviewed—both asked that their names not be published. Around 2003, the advanced collector, who has personally examined both the Ford Sale Pitt Farthing and the Silver Fox Pitt Farthing, went to Anton’s Saddle River, New Jersey, home where he and Anton studied several colonial coins. Among the items surveyed was the Anton Brass Pitt Farthing and the Anton White Metal Pitt Farthing. If the Anton Brass Pitt Farthing were to ever come to market, the advanced coin collector believes it would be the No. 3 coin on this census. Anton informed the collector that this Pitt farthing came to him from his former teacher, who obtained it from Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-1973), and that it could be traced back to Rutherford B. Hayes. (1822-1893). Despite this far-fetched provenance, the advanced collector, whose judgment in such matters can be trusted, believed the Anton Brass Pitt Farthing was genuine. The same day I interviewed the advanced collector, I spoke with a colonial coin dealer who also examined this piece. The coin dealer informed me that he saw the Anton Brass Pitt Farthing on three separate occasions—in the mid-90s, around 2010, and again about 2011. The coin dealer stated that in his opinion the Anton Brass Pitt Farthing is authentic and mint state. The dealer further opined that the Anton piece was the finest known. The weight of this medalet has not been

disclosed to the public. It shows superb detail of the hair and portholes; arguably greater detail than any other known Pitt farthing. The old black and white image does not permit the kind of description this medalet deserves. It has been placed third on this list primarily based on the personal observation and examination of the advanced collector—as he is the only person known to have studied the top three specimens. Despite Anton’s assertion of a multi-presidential provenance, the history of this piece should be listed as unknown.



#### **No. 4 The Kent-Alford Pitt Farthing**

--- According to Martin Kent, who discovered this medalet, it weighs 59.7 grains and is 24.8 mm in diameter. Mr. Kent owns a small coin shop in Alford Lincolnshire, England. His store was closed because of Covid-19 for many months, and he reports that the first week his business was back open in April 2021, a “*young chap*” brought this spectacular specimen into the store along with a grouping of modern British coins left to him by his grandfather. The hair detail is only matched or surpassed by the three Pitt farthings ahead of it on this census. All ten portholes are visible and it is well-struck with hard surfaces. There is an area above the foremast of the ship on the reverse that needs closer examination as it could be post-strike damage, but it is just as likely to have been present on the flan pre-strike as it has an appearance not unlike that seen on many other Pitt farthings. This specimen could not be observed in-hand because of Covid-19 and other restrictions; however, based on the weight and diameter and known details that have only been observed on authentic specimens, this Pitt farthing is authentic. It is a stunning addition to this census. The fact that it was discovered in England like so many other Pitt farthings, may put the final nail in the coffin of the belief that they were originally produced in America. Currently in the collection of Martin Kent, who provided the images and permission to publish the same.





Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

**No. 5 The John W. Adams Pitt Farthing** (Heritage, 1/12/2014) lot 3082;

Ex: Roper Collection (Stack's, 12/1983) lot 169.

--- This medalet weighs between 63.27 and 64.2 grains and is 25.3 mm in diameter. It was previously graded EF and shows a bright brass color with some lighter tones. Most recently, this specimen appeared in Stack's Bowers ANA Sale, 8/11/2016, lot 3004, where it was in a PCGS AU55 slab and said to be the *finest known*—a common claim among catalogers and one of the reasons this census was created. This Pitt farthing is clearly inferior to the four prior specimens. Stack's Bowers made no mention of the Adams Sale in its 2016 catalog but did list the prior Roper Sale. The coloring on this medalet is particularly nice, but it lacks the detail found on the Ford, Silver Fox, Anton, and Kent-Alford pieces. This is principally true of the ship's portholes on the reverse. On the top group, all ten portholes can be clearly seen, whereas only a few can be seen on this piece. In the Roper Sale, this medalet was listed as weighing 64.2 grains, but when Heritage sold it in 2014 it was down to 4.1 grams or about 63.27 grains. By 2016 it was back up to 64.2 gr. in the Stack's ANA Sale. While collectors endure fluctuations in grading standards, the weight of a coin should remain a constant and the discrepancies in the reported weight are inexcusable. The current owner of this specimen is not known. In the 1983 Roper Sale, it sold for \$6,600.00, but it fetched \$38,187.50 in the 2014 Heritage Sale, and \$58,750.00 in the most recent 2016 Stack's ANA Sale.



**No. 6. The William & Mary Pitt Farthing;**

Ex: Charles T. Lark, Jr. (1918-1983);

--- This medalet weighs 62.5 grains. Now part of the Lark Coin Collection, Special Collections Research Center, William & Mary (W&M) Libraries, it was a testimonial gift from Charles Lark's estate to W&M in 1984. It was examined in the rare bookroom at the Earl Gregg Swem Library at W&M on June 17, 2019. The hair detail on Pitt's tie-wig on this medalet is only surpassed by the top four pieces on this census. The same high-degree of sharpness is not seen on the reverse where only 6 portholes are visible under magnification. There are scratches in the obverse fields from what appears to have been a harsh cleaning long ago. These old cleaning-lines distract slightly from the overall appearance. A vibrant yellow-gold brass color shines in the protected areas of the obverse with much more bright brass color showing on the reverse. The brass color is the result of the old cleaning. With the passing of time since it was cleaned, this medalet has retoned and is now mostly a pleasing light brown. Initially, based on an examination of high-quality photographs, it was believed this specimen had traces of silvering, but an in-hand examination showed this was an illusion created by light reflecting off smooth areas worn by friction from the paper envelope in which it is kept—a lesson that it is always best to examine numismatic items in-hand rather than rely on photographic images. This Pitt farthing cannot be traced in the historical record. According to W&M, there is no documentation concerning where, when, or from whom Lark acquired it, but it is authentic. Although it surpasses the Adams Pitt Farthing with regard to observable details, the harsh cleaning, scratches, and overall eye appeal, put it below that piece. This is the first known publication of an image of this medalet, which, along with the weight, was generously provided by W&M.





© The Trustees of the British Museum.

#### **No. 7. The British Museum Pitt Farthing;**

Ex: Edward Hawkins (1780-1867)

--- This medalet is 24 mm in diameter. The weight is unrecorded. It is currently housed in the British Museum in London, item No. M.4717, and was previously part of Edward Hawkins' collection. The above image is published courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum. Mr. Hawkins was the keeper of the Department of Antiquities at the British Museum, which he joined in 1825, after an earlier career as a banker. The British Museum purchased his collection of English medals upon his retirement in 1860. This piece was undoubtedly part of the 1860 acquisition, meaning it has the oldest provenance of any Pitt farthing; outpacing its next closest rival, the C. Wyllys Betts Pitt Farthing, by nearly three decades. The British Museum lists this medalet as "bronze." This is almost certainly an error, but without a weight to go with the size, we cannot be certain. The surface is covered with a silver wash that obscures the planchet's true color, making positive identification of the metal with the naked eye difficult. The silvering covers the entire surface. Although many Pitt farthings exhibit residue of past silvering, only the Silver Fox Pitt Farthing and this medalet have managed to retain their original silvering in its entirety; however, the silvering on this piece is not nearly as nice or uniform as what can be seen on the Silver Fox Pitt Farthing. Slight environment damage to the silvering, and possibly to the underlying metal, at the base of the bust and large sections of the obverse and reverse legends detracts from this piece's overall eye-appeal. The superb hair detail coupled with the fact that 80% of the portholes are visible earns this Pitt farthing a rightful place in the top ten of this census. Because of its recent discovery in the British Museum's collection and Covid-19 restrictions that have closed the museum to the public, this medalet could not be observed in-hand. It is this author's opinion that this specimen was among the last struck based on die wear characteristics observed in the lettering—particularly in the "F" on the obverse, which is seriously worn and incomplete.



**No. 8 The Archangel Pitt Farthing** (Stack's-Bowers, 10/26/2018) lot 7053;

Ex: Pine Tree Auction Co., 10/18/1975, lot 582;

--- This medalet is 61.1 grains, and was graded very fine in the 1975 auction catalog along with a description that it was "*tied for finest known*" and "*one of the most fabulous rarities of the colonial series*" with not over six different examples traced. Further described by Walter Breen as "*most details of very fine sharpness, not well struck up on shoulder or some curls.*" It resurfaced in 2018 in the Archangel Sale, where it was examined at lot viewing in Baltimore. Through some unexplained mechanism, it went from VF in 1975 (graded by Breen) to a PCGS slabbed EF45 in 2018. In all honesty, Breen probably graded it too low. Regardless, it rightfully deserves a place at No. 8 on this list. It has hard surfaces, a pleasing dark-brown color, and only slightly less detail than the John Adams Pitt farthing. It shows some die swelling on the reverse in an arc from the stern of the ship to the "A" in *AMERICA*. This same die swelling is observed on many other specimens. A very attractive example. It sold for \$26,400 in 2018.

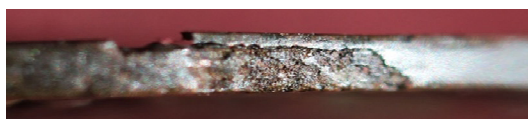




#### **No. 9 The C. Wyllys Betts Pitt Farthing**

Ex: C. Wyllys Betts Estate 1887;

--- This medalet weighs 54.2 grains and is 24.7 mm in diameter. It is currently housed in the Yale University Art Gallery and was part of C. Wyllys Betts' bequest to Yale College in 1887. It was examined, weighed, and photographed in New Haven on June 28, 2019. Many of the numismatic items in Yale's collection were cleaned decades ago. This piece did not escape that fate. Although the old cleaning did not result in any noticeable scratches, it has combined with environmental damage to create an unnatural looking surface that displays a patchwork of colors, including bright golds, rusty-reds, and dark browns. The thin light-weight planchet is uneven. The die swelling seen on some other pieces under the ship is readily apparent. This well-known reverse die bulge is paired with an obverse bulge in the left field unnoticed on any other Pitt farthing. Considering that there is a corresponding concave bend on the reverse side opposite this new bulge, this raised area is not from the die impression but is a planchet defect. The well-struck hair detail is in sharp contrast to the weakness of strike seen in the obverse legend where the bottom portions of some letters are missing, and the "T" in *STAMPS* is virtually invisible. The ship on the reverse has a flat appearance, with only two and a half portholes remaining. There is edge damage at 6 o'clock from post-strike environmental decay:



This edge damage spills over onto the reverse where it has obliterated one of the denticles at 2 o'clock. Yale describes the piece as struck on copper, but it is almost certainly struck on brass. On the outside of the box is written "*Bequest of C. Wyllys Betts*" and "*Betts 520.*" This medalet has the second oldest recorded provenance of any Pitt farthing. It is unknown when or where Betts acquired it, but the possibility exists that it is the untraced Dr. Clay/Crosby Pitt farthing. The strength of this piece rests in its historically significant provenance and the sharp obverse hair detail.



**No. 10. PCGS XF40 Slabbed Pitt Farthing**

--- No weight or provenance provided. PCGS graded XF40. In August 2019, images and information concerning a Pitt farthing were submitted to this author. The owner would not grant permission to publish any images of this slabbed medalet, and it was placed on this list based on low-quality photographs. In April 2020 it appeared on the Coin Rarities Online (CRO) site. Owner John Agre kindly granted permission to use the high-quality image from his site. As a result of these better images, it was moved up on this census. This Pitt farthing is a consistent dark brown throughout. The amount of hair detail is greater than both the Norweb and Brand-Briesland Pitt farthings, but the surfaces are not quite as nice. The reverse detail is sharp with four full portholes detected. Mr. Agre indicates there is *“some indication that it was once silvered, but has now toned.”* This observation is consistent with what is known from other examples. An examination of the PCGS holder reveals it was slabbed between 2005 and 2011. According to the California resident from whom Mr. Agre purchased this specimen, it was bought sometime in the 1980s. Listed on CRO for \$39,750, final sale price unknown.





**No. 11 The Brand-Briesland-Partrick Pitt Farthing** (Heritage 1/24/2021), lot 3906;

Ex: (Stack's, 6/1973) lot 803; Virgil Brand Collection.

--- According to Mark Borchardt, who weighed this specimen before it was slabbed in 2020, the weight is exactly 58 grains. The planchet is nearly flawless and free of surface damage with an unusual yellow-orange tinge. There is a barely perceptible rim nick at the first "R" in "RESTORER." Weakness is observed in the base of the "7" in the date unseen on any other specimens—this is from wear on the die, and not damage to the medalet. This commemorative medalet was off the market between 1973 and 2020, when it resurfaced as part of the legendary colonial numismatic cabinet of Donald Partrick. An argument can be made that it should be placed as high as seven or eight on this census: the surfaces of this specimen are harder and without the microscopic environmental damage seen on several of the examples before it, but it lacks the obverse and reverse detail seen on those pieces—a tradeoff that many would accept. Regardless, it is a solid example of the type. Based on the Virgil Brand papers (Ledger No. 6, Item 39618, 1907-1908), it was purchased by Brand on 5/15/1907 from Spink for \$27.50. This purchase matches nicely with a Pitt farthing advertised by Spink & Sons at their London store in 1907 for £5. It sold for \$8,000.00 in 1973, and \$31,200 at the 2021 Heritage sale of Donald Partrick's collection.



**No. 12 The Norweb # 1 Pitt Farthing** (Heritage 4/22/2021) lot 3012;

Ex: Bowers and Merena, Inc., 10/12-13/1987 lot 1242;

--- This yellow brass medalet weighs 62.7 grains and is 25 mm in diameter. Described as VF in the Norweb Sale, it would no doubt grade higher under today's evolving grading standards. It exhibits more hair detail than the Garrett Pitt Farthing, but less than the Ford, Adams, Anton, Kent-Alford, and Silver Fox specimens. There is some visible die swelling behind Pitt's head and some under the ship on the reverse, which is also observed on other examples. Two portholes are easily seen with the naked eye. Some micro-granularity is detected near "AMP" in "STAMPS." It lay hidden in the cabinet of noted colonial numismatic expert Donald Partrick from 1987 to 2020. It sold for \$4,620 in 1987, and in 2021 for \$22,800.





Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

**No. 13 The Newman Pitt Farthing** (Heritage, 10/5-8/2019; lot 4508);

Ex: Heritage 11/15/2014, lot 3002 (Newman Sale, Part V); Richard Picker—traded to Newman in 1956 or 1957.

--- This medalet weighs between 56.8 and 58.3 grains with a specific gravity of 6.75. It has a vertical diameter of 25.02 and a horizontal diameter of 25.04 mm with a thickness at the center of 1.27 mm. It is VF25 according to NGC with an interesting brownish-brass color that shows even wear—a beautiful problem-free specimen with a well-established provenance to one of the greatest numismatists of our time. The wear can possibly be attributed to circulation in commerce, but is somewhat due to weakness of strike. The strike has resulted in a lower grade by NGC than is appropriate. It is well centered with full borders. This medalet, which was examined in 2014 in New York City during lot viewing, sold for \$30,550 at the Newman sale. It is now the property of Christopher R. McDowell, purchased from the 2019 Heritage sale for \$20,400.



**No. 14 The Garrett Pitt Farthing,** (Bowers & Ruddy Galleries, 10/1/1980) lot 1320;

Ex: John Story Jenks Collection, Henry Chapman Sale 12/7-17/1921, lot 5445 (plated).

--- This medalet is between 62 and 64.35 grains, and has a specific gravity of between 8.25 and 8.49. It was graded EF in the past. The hair is not well defined and, if the color image in the 1980 auction catalog can be believed, it is an unattractive orange-gold color. This discoloration may be due to the fact that, according to Eric Newman, it has been abused by cleaning and recoloring. Newman further determined this excellent specimen was struck on almost pure copper. It is the only Pitt farthing confirmed to have been struck on a copper planchet, although one other is suspected. The 1921 Chapman plate has a better image than the 1980 auction catalog photograph. The high-resolution B&W image shown here was taken in 1982 and is displayed here publicly for the first time thanks to the ANA. This medalet was believed by the purchaser at the Garrett sale to be counterfeit, and it may have been donated to the ANA as such, but Newman determined it to be authentic in 1982 and again in 2002. Based on Newman's observations and certain diagnostic clues seen in the image provided by the ANA, this specimen is authentic. Its whereabouts are currently unknown. Anyone with information on the current location of this medalet should contact the ANA or this author. The last recorded sighting of this piece was in late 2002 when Newman shipped it back to Lawrence Lee, then the curator of the ANA. Newman believed this copper specimen to be superior to his own in strike and details, but the discoloration is very distracting and it has been placed just below the Newman medalet for that reason. Sold for \$5,500.00 in 1980.





**No. 15 The John Murdoch Pitt Farthing** (Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 7/21/1903), lot 444;

--- In the 1903 auction, this Pitt farthing was part of a combined lot with a Pitt halfpenny. The 1903 Sotheby cataloger described it as very fine. It was imaged on Plate V of the catalog. From the small old black and white photograph, it is difficult to tell for sure if this farthing is different from the others on this list. It is the opinion of this author that it is; however, it is similar in appearance to the Old Country Pitt Farthing. This specimen seems to be better struck than the Old Country Pitt farthing with greater detail in the legend. It has hard problem-free surfaces that show a reasonable degree of even wear. The size, weight, and current whereabouts of this Pitt farthing are unknown. It sold for £4 in 1903.



**No. 16 The Promised Lands Pitt Farthing**

Ex: Joseph R. Lasser; Tony Terranova, 2002; Stack's, 5/26/1976, lot 155; Pine Tree Rare Coin Auction, 4/30/1974, lot 321;

--- This medalet is 59.4 grains and was donated to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF) by Joseph R. Lasser (1923-2011). It was examined on June 17, 2019, in Williamsburg, Virginia. The 1974 catalog description of this piece states "*some details VF*," but under today's ever-weakening grading standards it now grades higher. Inside the envelope in which it is currently housed is a PCGS header with the number 232.40/5717875. According to PCGS's website this number is linked to a Pitt farthing graded "*XF40BN*." This medalet has been removed from its

PCGS plastic holder, permitting a much closer examination. It was previously sold and well-illustrated in Stack's sale of 5/26/1976, lot 155 where it was described as having "*a pleasant light olive and brassy color*" and "*probably 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> finest.*" While in 1976 this was believed to be true, it is listed as No. 15 on this census. It shows micro bubbling or pitting on the surfaces in some areas. This pitting does not appear to be from environmental damage. Rather, it is most likely the result of it having been originally struck on a cast planchet. No portholes can be seen on the reverse, and only a small amount of hair detail on the obverse remains. The obverse legend, however, is very well struck. This is in contrast with other examples where the legend is generally weakly struck. Overall, it is a very pleasing example that looks better in-hand than might be expected. On March 29, 2019, CWF conducted X-Ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy (XRF) testing on this piece to determine its alloy content. The testing showed it contained approximately 48% copper, 50% zinc, 1% lead, and .03% iron. The image, weight, and metallic content were all generously provided by CWF for inclusion in this census. It sold for \$8,250 in 1976. According to handwritten information on the paper envelope in which it is now kept, Tony Terranova paid \$21,250 for it sometime after 1976. It is unknown from whom Terranova acquired it. Terranova sold it to Lasser in 2002 for an undisclosed sum.



#### **No. 17 The Birmingham Antique Store Pitt Farthing**

Ex: Discovered by Eduard Joseph in a thrift shop in the West Midlands near Birmingham, England, in May 2019.

--- This medalet is 58.1 grains and 25 mm in diameter. The discoverer of this piece aptly describes it as "*mellow to dark brown with brassy highlights.*" It has an overall pleasing color, typical of higher-grade Pitt farthings. The obverse hair detail is strong with at least two portholes visible on the reverse. Thus, on strength of detail, it should be higher than No. 17, but it falls to its current spot on the census based on post-strike damage. There are scratches and digs in the obverse fields and, according to Mr. Joseph's report, "*the planchet is slightly dented in two places. The dents are shallow and did not otherwise damage the planchet. Whatever caused it, it seems to have been done with a blunt (non-sharp) object. One of the dents corresponds to the unevenly worn area in the ship's sails.*" The rim exhibits some dings, and is slightly flattened in two places. In



addition, Pitt's left shoulder shows some damage. Although these defects detract from the piece, it is still a strong example of the type based on the sharpness of the details, plus the nice color. It exhibits all the telltale signs of authenticity; thus, for Mr. Joseph, the man who found it in a small English thrift store, it is the numismatic find of a lifetime; the type of discovery the rest of us dream of making one day. Additionally, Mr. Joseph's quick and accurate reporting of his discovery allows us to trace it directly back to England, providing another clue as to the source of these pieces. This medalet remains in the possession of Mr. Joseph, a Germany-based collector of American coins.



**No. 18 The Old Country Pitt Farthing** (Dix Noonan Webb Auction, 9/28/2005) lot 1382;

Ex: From an Old North Country Collection.

--- This VF medalet is 56.4 grains. It was last sold at auction in London in 2005. It is a lovely light chocolate brown color, which the English cataloger described as "*dull coppery surfaces with hints of bright brass underneath.*" The details are rather flat from a weak strike. It is now housed in a PCGS holder and graded VF35. It has slightly more detail than the Newman Pitt Farthing on the obverse, but much less on the reverse where none of the ship's portholes are discernable. It sold for £12,000 at the 2005 auction; twice the low-end of the auction estimate. Although its current whereabouts are unknown, Northeast Numismatics, Inc. of Concord, MA, includes it in their sold archives. According to Tom Caldwell, President of Northeast Numismatics, this medalet was purchased jointly for \$24,550 by Northeast Numismatics and American Numismatic Rarities, LLC (ANR) with each paying half. Northeast Numismatics records show that ANR sold it for \$30,000. The piece was most likely sold privately by ANR as it does not appear in any auction catalog. Dave Bowers has no recollection of the piece and ANR's records no longer exist. Yet another Pitt farthing that can be traced directly back to England.



**No. 19 The Steinberg Sale Pitt Farthing**, (Stack's, 10/17/1989) lot 55;

Ex: Stack's 9/7-8/1979, lot 492;

--- This medalet is 62 grains. It was previously graded as EF (holed). It is sharply struck. Described in 1979 as having "*most hair detail visible as well as most of the portholes on the ship.*" The hole above Pitt's head affects only one stop on the obverse legend and the letter "A" on the reverse legend. A very solid example, but holed. Its lower ranking on this census is somewhat controversial as several people have commented that it should be higher based on the surface conditions and degree of observable details, but I feel an unholed lower-grade medalet is more desirable than a holed specimen that shows greater detail—again, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If it were not for the hole, it would rank in the top 10. Someone once liked it enough to wear it around their neck in honor of the Great Commoner. Although many holed Pitt halfpennies are known, this is the only known holed Pitt farthing. It has not surfaced in over 30 years and its current whereabouts are unknown. It sold for the bargain price of \$2,090 in 1989.





**No. 20 The Ted Craige Pitt Farthing** (Stack's 1/23/2013) lot 11033;

--- This medalet was listed at 33.95 grains in the 2013 Stack's catalog. PCGS accurately determined that it has AU Details. The surfaces are heavily crusted. The weight reported in the 2013 catalog description is alarmingly low. Dr. David Menchell, the current owner of this piece, reweighed it on January 17, 2019, at this author's request and arrived at a weight of 51.9 grains. It was examined in-hand on September 14, 2019, and the weight provided by Dr. Menchell verified. An envelope that came with the token includes Ted Craige's handwritten note: "(1766) PITT FARTHING / BRASS; CAST, FIRE BLACKED, CHASED (AS ALL ARE) VF25 for piece." This Pitt farthing shows detail on par with the top group on this census. It is well struck and shows superb high relief. Almost all the ship's portholes can be seen and the hair-detail is only surpassed by a few specimens. It is downgraded to No. 20 because of the environmental damage covering the entire surface of both sides; however, if the environmental damage could be overlooked, it would climb this list precipitously. It sold for \$8,775.00 in 2013.



**No. 21 The ANS Collection Pitt Farthing:**

--- Hidden in the ANS collection is a Pitt farthing that can be viewed at <http://numismatics.org/collection/1923.159.1>. It is 25 mm and weighs 51.7 grains. This Pitt farthing was examined on June 10, 2019, in New York City. The level of detail is low because it was struck on a very thin light-weight planchet, resulting in a poor initial impression. Wear has also smoothed some of the higher points. As a result, no portholes are visible, and the hair is ill-defined. The letter “F” in *FRIENDS* is illegible because of damage, and the bottom portions of many of the letters in the legend are ill-defined from the weak strike. It has an unnatural glossy appearance on both sides from a very old light cleaning and polishing that did not leave behind any scratches but has resulted in a distracting glow. This medalet shows slight signs of environmental damage impacting mostly the higher points at the top of Pitt’s wig. There is a white chalky substance in the damaged areas of the wig and some other areas of the obverse and reverse that appear to be concentrations of zinc. The higher points are a light rust-color, with the remaining areas showing a mostly dark brown color. The die bulge under the ship seen on some other specimens is observable. According to ANS’s records, it was a gift from John W. Garrett in 1923. It is not known from whom Garrett purchased this item or how much he paid.





#

**No. 22 The Buckeye Pitt Farthing;**

Ex: Tom Rinaldo; Roger Siboni

--- This olive-brown specimen was closely examined on May 4, 2019, outside Columbus, Ohio. The examination included the use of special magnification equipment normally employed by ophthalmologists to view the retina. It has an overall pleasant eye-appeal. Because it is currently encapsulated in a plastic holder, the weight could not be determined. The paper envelope that originally accompanied it does not list the weight. This medalet is graded F15 by PCGS. The apparent environmental damage is not noted on the PCGS holder. A small section of the ship's bow and rigging are partially obliterated by what looks to be dezincification; a process seen on some Rhode Island ship medals and other brass objects where zinc gas within the metal escapes to the surface causing bubbling and pitting. Despite the damage, the letters *ICA* in *AMERICA* are visible to the naked eye. Currently part of the outstanding colonial coin cabinet of Dr. Carl A. Minning, Jr., who purchased it privately from Roger Siboni for \$20,000 in February, 2005.



**No. 23 The 2010 Americana Pitt Farthing**, (Stack's-Bowers Galleries, 1/27/2010) lot 4080;

Ex: Stack's Sale of 7/1983, lot 510; Tony Terranova

--- This medalet is 25 mm and 56.8 grains with a very fine uniform brownish appearance. It was sent to Cincinnati by John T. Bolger for study on August 6, 2019, where it was carefully examined. One of the more difficult decisions on this census is the ranking between this piece and the Buckeye Pitt farthing—both have their strengths and weaknesses. This specimen shows consistent wavy environmental damage on both sides, whereas the Buckeye Pitt farthing shows lighter overall environmental damage but isolated heavy damage. The surface roughness does not impact the ability to see any of the design elements: legend, bust, ship, etc. are all there, but with a lower-level of detail as the medalet was not originally well-struck. This specimen is now in the advanced colonial coin cabinet of John T. Bolger, who purchased it privately from Tony Terranova on April 30, 2011. It sold publicly for \$7,475 at the July 2010 Stack's auction.





Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

**No. 24 The Norweb # 2 Pitt Farthing**, (Bowers and Merena, Inc., 10/12-13/1987) lot 1241;

--- This medalet is 25 mm and 47.5 grains (the current owner reports it as 47.6 gr.). It is graded VF20 by PCGS. It was sold by Heritage at the 2002 FUN Signature Sale 1/9-12/2002, lot 5063, where it was listed as being from the David Bruce Collection. Most recently, it appeared in Heritage's 2007 ANA Sale, 8/10/2007, lot 5063. It is believed to have been struck on copper or an alloy resembling copper. According to the cataloger, this token's "*appearance is quite unlike brass. Dark brown.*" It was examined on September 14, 2019, but a visual inspection by several experts could not reach a consensus on the question of the metallic content of the planchet. It was ultimately decided that the issue would need to be determined through scientific testing. The surfaces are "*Pebbly,*" and the reverse shows some pitting. The flan is reported to be thick, which is odd considering the lower than average weight. Unfortunately, the thickness of the flan could not be verified because this specimen has been slabbed. The strike is somewhat irregular on the reverse. There are also a couple of rim breaks. Currently owned by Sydney Martin's estate. Mr. Martin purchased it at the 2007 ANA Sale. Syd's notes indicate it has "*a small rim defect at K9.*" The 2007 cataloger noted this same defect. This specimen and the Garrett Pitt Farthing are the only two pieces believed to be on copper planchets. It sold for \$1,320.00 in 1987, \$4,830.00 in 2002, and \$17,250.00 in 2007.



**No. 25 The 2008 Americana Pitt Farthing,** (Stack's, 1/16/2008) lot 5608; Tony Terranova

--- This medalet is 25.1 mm and 60.2 grains. According to the 2008 cataloger, it was discovered around 2007. It was sent to Cincinnati by John T. Bolger for study on August 6, 2019, where it was carefully examined by this author. Stack's graded it EF with substantial environmental damage and pitting with portions of the legend missing from damage as well as other details. It is an item that looks better in person than in a two-dimensional photograph, as it was initially well-struck resulting in a nice high-relief bust image. This is in contrast to the often weak strike of these pieces that leaves a flatter appearance. A surprising amount of hair detail remains visible, due mostly to the superior original strike. The Stack's cataloger was correct—it was at least EF when it went into the ground and has retained a great deal of superb detail particularly in the area of William Pitt's bust. It is mostly dark olive and brown with some lighter areas on the obverse. The reverse has splotches of unnatural light-green verdigris. The environmental damage is more pronounced on the reverse than the obverse, but it has been stabilized. The edge is consistent with the rest of the surface, showing erosion from environmental decay. It is not encapsulated, permitting a much more enjoyable viewing experience. After this census was posted on the Newman Numismatic Portal, Jonathan Brecher reached out to say that he originally purchased this medalet from an Ebay listing on 9/16/07 for £317.77, plus £5 shipping, which worked out to \$644.68 at the time. Brecher asked the seller for information about the item and was told that it came from the estate of an Englishman who spent most of life in the Army, having been stationed in Anglesey in Wales, in Somerset in the West Country, Lincoln and West Sussex. The son of the Englishman stated that his father did a bit of metal detecting and he did not know if his father found the coin in the ground or purchased it. Images of this medalet from 9/16/07 clearly show that it was a ground find. This is another Pitt farthing that can be directly traced back to England. It is also a second Pitt farthing in the advanced colonial coin cabinet of Mr. Bolger. It was purchased privately by him from Tony Terranova on February 19, 2008. It sold publicly at Stack's January 16, 2008 auction for \$5,462.50.





**No. 26 The Starr Sale Pitt Farthing**, (Stack's, 1/13/1993) lot 940;

--- This medalet is 52.9 grains with a fine appearance, but, according to the 1993 cataloger, it is technically EF, or better. Although it could not be examined in-hand because its whereabouts are unknown, an EF grade seems unlikely. This medalet shows severe environmental damage with heavily pitted surfaces, but the bust, legend, and ship are all there and can be easily detected. The image in the 1993 catalog is black and white, but it was described as “[d]ark golden brown” and “*possibly an excavation coin.*” This author would remove the word “*possibly*” from that sentence. It sold for \$1,320 in 1993.



**No. 27 The Baltimore Sale Pitt Farthing** (Stack's, 11/16/2012) lot 6018;

Ex: John "Jack" Royse Collection. Purchased from Jeff Kierstead Rare Coins. Earlier from Stack's sale of 1/1993, lot 940.

--- This medalet is 51.7 grains and shows heavy environmental damage and was described by the 2012 cataloger as being "*mottled golden brass*" in color with "*chocolate brown surfaces.*" Any grade of this specimen would be a wild guess. Under the deep pitting and damage, the image of a ship emerges as if from a heavy fog. Some of the lettering can be read. The best that can be said for this specimen is that it is what it purports to be—a Pitt farthing. Walter Breen described the New Netherlands Coin Co., Inc., 4/23/1960, Pitt farthing as having been in a fire. Is this the same token? It certainly matches that description. It sold for \$3,645 in 2012.

**Untraced or Unverified Pitt Farthings**

Below is a listing of Pitt farthings that have been sold or advertised in the past. Some of these untraced medalets are probably included in the census above but their provenance has been lost. Others, however, are still out there and have not publicly surfaced in many decades.

**The Anton White Metal Pitt Farthing**

--- In his *Encyclopedia of Colonial and Early American Coins*, Dave Bowers lists three varieties of Pitt farthings in different metals. The second is listed as "*W-8347 · white metal: One reported in the William T. Anton Jr. collection. Rarity: URS-2.*" The URS-2 designation indicates there are as many as two white metal Pitt farthings. In correspondence with this author, Bowers stated that he had never seen this specimen in person or an image of it. This white metal Pitt



farthing corresponds to Breen-250, which Breen stated was stuck on a tin planchet, but which he also could not verify. Shortly before this article went to the printer, an advanced colonial coin collector called to say that around August 2003 he met Anton at his Saddle River, New Jersey, home and the two of them examined a number of colonial coins. Among the coins surveyed was this white metal Pitt farthing. The advanced collector talked to Anton about the piece, which was described as being in a very high state of preservation (like new, “*fresh*”). When the well-known collector expressed interest in the white metal Pitt farthing, Anton took it off the table saying, “*I don’t think that piece is for you.*” The same day I talked to the advanced coin collector, I talked to a colonial coin dealer who briefly examined the Anton White Metal Pitt Farthing in-hand on two different occasions. The coin dealer assured me that the white metal Pitt farthing in Anton’s collection is “*100% authentic.*” If it is authentic, it is possibly unique. Anton’s colonial coin collection contained many unusual and rare pieces, so it is certainly possible this Pitt farthing is genuine, but judgment should be withheld until it can be properly examined. Until it can be authenticated, photographed, weighed, and measured it cannot be included in this census.

**James Kelly UNC Pitt Farthing (Invoice 7/4/1946);**

--- Described only as “*Pitt farthing. Unc., very rare thus - \$40.00.*” Stamped received August 19 in James Kelly’s records. This is one of the finest reported Pitt Farthing, but no image could be located. The same medalet seems to appear in Burdette G. Johnson’s Invoices (St. Louis Stamp & Coin Co.) of 1945 to Eric Newman, p. 215. It is further surmised that it is the same specimen in the Hollinbeck Stamp & Coin Co. auction 1/7/1947, Lot 28 described simply as “*uncirculated*” \$75. It is also possible that it is the same specimen that appeared in a James Kelly auction held on 5/13-15/1949, Lot 795 where it was described only as “*Ext. fine to About Uncirculated and very rare. Seldom offered.*” The 1949 Kelly catalog lists an estimate of \$25.00. In November 1964, the Pickwick Coin Co. offered an EF-AU Pitt farthing in brass for \$3,750. It is hard to know if these are the same item or multiple items because the descriptions leave much to be desired by today’s standards and no weight or image was provided for any of the listings. Moreover, it is possible that this medalet is represented in the above census, but graded EF or some lower grade.

**1871 Dr. Charles Clay Pitt Farthing (George Leavitt & Co., 12/5-7/1871) lot 154;**

--- This brass medalet, which is clearly a Pitt farthing, has an extraordinarily detailed lot description for the time. A note immediately preceding lot 154 states that “[*t*]hese tokens made their appearance in Massachusetts in 1776. They are supposed to have originated in England. The one that follows is not known to American collectors. It will be regarded as one of the most desirable pieces in this rich collection.” The actual lot description states that the token is “*in very fine preservation, being but little circulated. Size 15 (the size of the other is 18). Unique.*” The medalet came from the collection of Dr. Charles Clay who lived in Manchester, England, and assembled an exceedingly beautiful collection of American colonial coins and medals. This Pitt farthing was sold along with several other Pitt related medals and tokens that originated in England. According to the handwritten annotations inside the auction catalog displayed on the Newman Portal, this medalet was sold to Sylvester Sage Crosby for \$8.50. It was sold again on 6/27-29/1883 (Messrs. Bangs & Co), lot 1403, and cannot be traced from there.

**1889 Shorthouse Pitt Farthing** (Bangs & Co, 12/6/1889) lot 193.

--- This brass medalet was offered as part of the sale of E. Shorthouse, Esq. of Birmingham, England's collection. As was the custom in those days, there was only a brief description saying this Pitt farthing was very fine and in brass. A note in the auction catalog on the Newman Portal further indicates that it sold for \$25, a large sum in those days. Assuming this medalet sold to an American, it would be yet another Pitt farthing transported from England to America.

**1890 Parmelee Sale Pitt Farthing** (Messrs. Bangs & Co., 6/25-26/1890) lot 566;

--- Described in comparison to Pitt halfpenny in the previous lot in the sale as "*Pitt token: similar type, but smaller and differently engraved design: yellow bronze, very good: rare; size 16.*" Sold for \$8.50. The same price as Crosby paid 19 years before for the Clay specimen.

**1910 Wayte Raymond Pitt Farthing** (Wayte Raymond Sale, 12/8/1910) lot 4;

--- Described as "*Very Fine.*" Not illustrated, no details.

**1911 Ashhurst Sale Pitt Farthing** (Chapman, 6/30/1911), page 1, no lot numbers.

--- Described only as "*Very Fine.*"

**1928 Max Mehl Pitt Farthing** (Mehl Auction, 3/27/1928);

--- Described only as "*Very Good.*" The auctioneer added that it was "*[t]he first I have ever offered in my sales.*"

**1929 James Clark Sale Pitt Farthing** (Paul Lange Auction, 6/14-14/1929) lot 16;

--- Suspected Pitt farthing, described only as "*Pitt Token, 1766, small planchet. Very Fine*"

**1937 Elder Sale Pitt Farthing**, (Elder Sale 12/11/1937) lot 1185;

--- Described as "*Fine.*" Not illustrated, no details.

**James Kelly VG Pitt Farthing** (Invoice 1/22/1946);

--- Described only as "*Pitt farthing. Very good, rare \$20.00.*" Not stamped as received. This same token may have reappeared in 1947 and 1950 Max Mehl auctions held on 9/17/1947 and 5/23/1950, Lots 3113 and 2556, respectively. In the 1947 auction, it is described as having a "*glossy steel color.*"

**1948 Royal Sale Pitt Farthing** (Mehl Auction, 3/23/1948) lot 2861;

--- Described only as "*Strictly fine.*"

**1951/53 Kagin Mail Bid Pitt Farthing** (Kagin, 11/28/1951, 1/31/53, and 11/30/1953) lots 952, 476 & 530;

--- Described only as "*very fine. SCARCE*" or "*RARE*" and "*struck in copper.*" Listed for \$30.00. If it is actually struck in copper, it could possibly be the Norweb No. 2 Pitt Farthing.

**1954 Kagin Auction Pitt Farthing** (Kagin's Auction 8/7/1954) lot 2172;

--- Described only as "*very fine.*" Most likely the same medalet listed by Kagin from 1951 to 1953. If this medalet was struck in copper, it could be the Norweb No. 2 Pitt Farthing.



**1960 New Netherlands Pitt Farthing** (New Netherlands Coin Co., Inc., 4/23/1960) lot 49;

--- Described as Good, dark and very rough. Also described as being in a fire. According to an article that appeared in *The Numismatist* following the sale, "*a rough Pitt farthing went to a dealer at \$52.*"